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SCIENCE

FRIDAY, AUGUST 23, 1912

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF A SCIENTIST¹

It may be asked what right has a scientist to have a philosophy? He spends his days in the study of gross, material things. The geologist busies himself with the earth, the composition and the structure of its crust, the nature of its rocks and other formations, the fossil remains of geologic ages, the elevation of its mountains, and the forces that tend to level the same. These and correlated subjects furnish the material with which his mentality employs itself and upon which it exhausts itself. The astronomer goes further afield and employs his time in the study of the moon, sun and the stars, but all his activities are materialistic. The biologist concerns himself with the development and modification of the various forms of life. His field is a wide and interesting one. The physicist is engaged in the observation of mass, and the effect of forces thereon. The chemist goes into the atomic structure and arrangement of matter. The physiologist is busy with function and the pathologist with abnormal structure and function. So we might go on enumerating the varied and multiple duties of the scientist, but, after all, his range of activity is confined to material things and what does he know of the higher life? What right has he to interest himself or to offer to speak with any authority on the great problems of life? What can the scientist know about idealism? Between materialism and idealism there is supposed to be a great chasm, which no man in his right senses would

¹ A popular lecture given in the summer school at the University of Michigan, July 2, 1912.